

NOVEMBER 25, 2003

SCHAKOWSKY INTRODUCES NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY DATABASE WASHINGTON, D.C.
- U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) introduced the National Food Safety Database, legislation to give school officials, nursing homes and hospital administrators and child care facilities access to critical information about food suppliers before they make purchasing food decisions.□□

The National Food Safety Database, H.R. 3628, would contain information that documents whether a company has a history of providing safe food - food that has been produced and packaged under sanitary conditions and is properly branded.□ It will also document any outbreaks of food-borne illness that have originated from the provider and any enforcement actions that have been taken against the provider.

□ "The information that will be provided by the database is critical to public health.□ Putting information in the hands of the ultimate consumers is a great way to empower people to make sure they have safe food," said Schakowsky, who is the ranking Democrat on the Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection Subcommittee.

([Chicago Tribune](#) , 11/25/03, L [awmaker urges database aimed at school food safety.Schakowsky bill would track fines, suppliers, illnesses](#) .)

□

Below is Schakowsky's Congressional Record statement:

Protecting the Vulnerable, Ensuring Food Safety

□ Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address a danger that threatens every one of us-food-borne illnesses.□ Each year, 76 million people suffer from food-borne illness.□ Of those individuals, approximately 325,000 will be hospitalized and more than 5,000 will die.□ Our children, the elderly, and those with weakened immunity systems face an even greater danger.□ Of the deaths caused by food-borne illness nearly every year, children comprise nearly 40 percent of the victims.□ I know parents who have lost their children to this threat.

Today, I am introducing legislation, the National Food Safety Database Act, that will give officials charged with caring for our children and our other vulnerable loved ones the information they need to make safe food purchasing choices.□ My bill will create a national database containing information that documents whether a company has a history of providing safe food-food that has been produced and packaged under sanitary

conditions and is properly branded. It will also document any outbreaks of food-borne illness that have originated from the provider and any enforcement actions that have been taken against the provider. Officials at hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and child care facilities can access this database from a secure website and use that information to ensure that they are serving those in their care the safest food possible. The final authority over the information included in this database will be granted to the Secretary of Health and Human Services who will work in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture. A task force consisting of anticipated users, representatives of food manufacturers, processors, packers, transporters, and representatives of consumer groups will also advise the Secretary as to what information needs to be included to ensure our loved ones' safety. The Secretary will also have the authority to make grants to states to help them access and use the database.

The information that will be provided by the database is critical to public health. We need to prevent outbreaks of food-borne illness in our schools. Earlier this year a school in Illinois received ammonia-tainted food and did not receive adequate notification that the product had been contaminated. Luckily, no one died, but a number of teachers and students suffered. Currently the ability of hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and child care providers to provide quality care is compromised by their inability to get adequate and timely food safety information. Safety histories of the companies are not shared with the officials who purchase the food. Due to a complex web of food manufacturers, distributors and brokers, if the USDA or FDA announces that a manufacturer has produced tainted food, officials often have no way to determine if affected foods are in their kitchens and being served to our loved ones.

A person fed tainted food can experience diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain. Those in hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and child care centers are by far the most vulnerable among us. Their immune systems are not as strong; their bodies are just not as sturdy. They can become very ill and can even die from food-borne illness, as far too many already have.

Food manufacturers also stand to gain from this bill. Companies that have a history of providing safe food will have that fact known. Should an accident occur and there is an outbreak, it will be much easier for companies to know where the tainted food has gone. The company will be able to stop the outbreak faster and reduce their liability.

I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this legislation that will increase the safety of the most vulnerable in our society. Our loved ones deserve to know that someone is looking out for their safety while they can't do it themselves. Without this bill, we can't make that guarantee.